



RESOLUTION R-2023-08

A RESOLUTION OPPOSING EFFORTS TO WEAKEN LOCAL ZONING

WHEREAS:

North Carolina has more than 532 towns and cities, the vast majority of which are small or mid-sized, and each of which has a unique identity, history, and governance; and

Although planning and zoning options in all communities must adhere to state statute, they vary greatly, based on the desires of each community's residents and elected officials; and

Threats to the state's cities and towns can arise when developers try to convince legislators to strip local zoning requirements to meet their needs or allow them to opt out of local zoning altogether. Threats can also arise when advocates for increased housing demand that legislators support homogenization in zoning, arguing that all types of housing should be allowed everywhere; and

Like hundreds of other small- to medium-sized towns in our state, including neighboring towns here in Guilford County, our town has worked diligently since our incorporation in 1998 to craft local zoning that is responsive to the needs of residents, builders, and developers, as well as local businesses; to this end, members of our Planning and Zoning Board, as well as periodic *ad hoc* resident committees tasked with recommending updates to the town's Future Land Use Plan, have worked with residents and our Town Council to periodically update local zoning; and

As a result, Oak Ridge's Future Land Use Plan continues to evolve, incorporating new zoning options and revising others, consistent with the needs of our community. Our zoning reflects a strong commitment to individual property rights while seeking to retain the unique rural and historic character that has attracted so many residents to our beautiful town and has continued to strengthen property values; and

We acknowledge the State of North Carolina's oversight over all state municipalities, respect the limitations and requirements established by current state statutes, and are grateful to state legislators for their dedication, and recognize their desire to address state-wide housing issues. At the same time, we believe that one-size-fits-all efforts that mandate significant changes to local zoning authority are misguided.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council of the Town of Oak Ridge urges the state legislature to work with local leaders and the North Carolina League of Municipalities to craft incentives and targeted approaches appropriate to housing issues in specific areas. We ask our state legislators to balance their oversight with respect for the critical role local zoning plays in maintaining the civic health of our state and balancing the needs of residents with those of builders and developers. Finally, we strenuously object to state bills seeking to homogenize, significantly

weaken, or otherwise interfere in local zoning authority, on the basis that such interference threatens a town's ability to determine its unique identity and future within the limitations and requirements established by state statute. More specifically, the Town objects to the following:

- A potential bill that would overturn local zoning to authorize the removal of approximately 1,000 acres of land from the center of the Town of Summerfield, commonly referred to as "de-annexation," despite being a constituent area within the Summerfield's original boundaries, as chartered by the General Assembly, and despite the proximity of some of this property to the Greensboro watershed;
- Senate Bill 317, which would allow developers to skirt all local zoning under the guise of providing affordable housing, a requirement that would expire within a year's time;
- House Bill 332/Senate Bill 275, which would impose a 21-day shot clock on local building inspections;
- House Bill 474, which would mandate that all residential and mixed-use zoning allow small housing such as tiny homes, cottage homes, and accessory dwelling units; and
- All other similar bills that seek to override local zoning authority without the active collaboration and consent of local communities.

In this way, the Town of Oak Ridge also seeks to uphold the rights of all municipalities in North Carolina to self-determination within the parameters established by state statute and in collaboration with residents as well as state and county leaders.

Council adopted Resolution R-2023-08 on March 30, 2023.